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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOODS AND DRUGS -- No. 13  
Tuesday, May 27, 1930

A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, chief, Eastern District, Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Tuesday mornings at 10 a. m. Eastern Standard Time, through WJZ, New York, and the following other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company: KWK, St. Louis; WREN, Kansas City; KFAB, Lincoln, Nebr.; WRC, Washington; WBZA, Boston; KSTP, St. Paul; WSM, Nashville; WAPI, Birmingham; WJAX, Jacksonville; WPTF, Raleigh; WRVA, Richmond.

My friends, your Government representative is before you once again to tell you personal experiences in the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, to illustrate how your foods and drugs are safeguarded, and to tell you how to read food and drug labels.

Judge Landis while sitting on the Federal bench once said when handing down an important decision, "The Federal Food and Drugs Act was passed for the purpose among others, of giving to the consumer the chance to know what he buys and eats". Do you know definitely and certainly the composition of the foods you buy? If you don't you are not an intelligent buyer. You need to become a label reader. Won't you accept my invitation to make you an intelligent label reader and therefore an intelligent buyer? All you have to do is to write for my free read-the-label information and there is a great mass of it ready to mail to you upon request.

I shall tell you a story today which perhaps will amaze you, - it will seem incredible, - but nevertheless it is true. The story is about the detection of the use of dead horses for beef for human food. As I have previously pointed out on a number of occasions, there are people with imagination, with facile minds who are ever on the alert for the big chance. One such individual got his inspiration from his observation of a dead horse lying in the street of one of our large cities. His subsequent conduct would lead us to believe that he speculated as he viewed the carcass of the horse something like this: Here is my big chance to make a lot of money. But let us go on with our story.

There was a factory which purported to make glue and fertilizer and no one outside of the employ of the company could get into this plant; but one day a typical bum with a week's growth of beard and a costume as diversified as it was abbreviated, applied for a job at the plant. He was willing to work for a small wage and he was assigned to pilot the dead horse wagon. His job was to go into the big city each day and collect the dead horses at addresses which were given to him. This tramp was really very badly treated by his new employer, for he had no help or assistance. It was his job to load dead horses, with a crane operated with a hand wheel, into his closed dead horse wagon. Fortunately, for him, he had a friend who met him each morning in the city, and aided him in the heavy work of loading the dead horses into the dead horse wagon. Then, he proceeded to the plant, where the dead horses were worked over. His friend rode with him nearly to the plant and then dismounted and disappeared.

A man willing to take such a job at such low wages, with such hard work, and with the constant smell of terribly nauseating odors all day long, must have

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needed a job very badly; and then there was another man equally disreputable, who worked on an adjoining garbage dump, picking rags. This man occasionally dropped into the glue and fertilizer factory to get a drink of water, to rest in the shade and to fraternize with other rough characters who were employed by the concern, as skinners and cutters.

Have you guessed who the driver of the dead horse wagon really was? Have you guessed who his assistant was? Have you guessed who the rag picker was? Well my friends, they were all Federal food and drug inspectors. They secured the evidence that this concern was salvaging meat from dead horses, horses dying from disease, - for sale for human food. They secured the evidence of this diabolical scheme, conceived and born of human greed, which put the plant out of business. Unfortunately, the parties responsible for this unforgivable sin escaped and could not be apprehended; but my friends, I can assure you that nothing like this has ever happened since, and it is by actions such as this that your food and drugs are safeguarded through the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act.

Now for my Read the Label information:

In recent years we find a development in the marketing of foods which is of very great importance. Foods are being advertised and sold more and more on the basis of their vitamin content. Manufacturers are telling you to buy their products because they contain this or that vitamin. Statements such as "Rich in Vitamins" used with many variations and amplifications of language, often accompanied by claims of health-giving qualities, are appearing frequently on present day labels and in current advertising. Many such statements are false, even more of them are misleading.

I regret that I cannot tell you that labels of this class always tell the truth, for the fact is that manufacturers who wish to capitalize and cash in on the public's interest in vitamins, by making unwarranted label claims, have grown so rapidly that the authorities enforcing the food and drugs act have not been able to keep up with them

The testing for vitamin content of foods and drugs is a very slow and expensive process, and the progress of legally enforcing vitamin label statements to limitations of strict truth has not yet been accomplished under the law, nor will it be possible to do so for some little time to come. Hence you may not believe all the vitamin statements you see on food labels. We are everlastingly keeping on the job however, developing a background of scientific information and securing the necessary evidence to bring all vitamin misbranders to account and to clean all labels of false vitamin claims: and just as surely as the sun shines, the day will come when labels will tell only the simple truth in respect to vitamins.

In the meantime it is incumbent upon you to learn all you can about vitamins, in order that you may be able to more intelligently evaluate the meaning of vitamin label statements which you encounter.

Vitamins are invisible food accessories that are essential in the normal nutrition of the human body. They are produced and formed by nature and she distributes them generously in a great variety of food products. Research and

study have fully demonstrated their existence, and have revealed their necessity in the normal diet. Vitamins are known to be responsible for the prevention of various pathological conditions and nutritional deficiencies termed collectively "Vitamin Deficiency Diseases."

In all, there are six known vitamins that for convenience are named alphabetically- A, B, C, D, E, and G. Each performs a necessary function in the body and a deficiency of any one in the diet produces certain pathological conditions that are manifested by definite symptoms. I am now going to tell you something about vitamins and of the conditions caused by vitamin deficiency in the diet and the principal foods in which the various known vitamins occur.

The first is called Vitamin "A". This is the anti-erophthalmic vitamin - It is fat soluble. A complete absence of this vitamin is one of the causes of lowered resistance of the mucus membranes. It is only gradually destroyed by heat, but is rapidly destroyed by oxidation, and the body seems to have power to store this vitamin for future use. The "A" vitamin is abundant in butter, carrots, cod-liver oil, cream, egg yolks, lettuce, milk, spinach, and tomatoes. It is contained in a lesser extent in asparagus, bananas, corn, kale, peas, pineapples, dried prunes, pumpkin, swiss chard, and some meat fats, and to a still lesser extent in many other products. Green lettuce is richer than white lettuce in Vitamin A; green asparagus is richer than bleached asparagus; and yellow corn richer than white corn. Indeed it is relatively abundant in green vegetables.

The second is Vitamin "B". Its complete absence causes polyneuritis, and is associated with beri-beri. The original Vitamin B which we are describing, is now known to contain at least two vitamins, sometimes known as F and G, and in some quarters as vitamins B1 and B2. A deficiency of vitamin "B" is claimed by some investigators to be manifested through lack of appetite, fatigue nervousness, and constipation. This has not been definitely proved. Vitamin "B" is abundant in asparagus, tomatoes, oranges, and egg yolk, but the richest source is Brewers yeast. It is contained to lesser extent in animal's brains, beet leaves, buttermilk, cabbage, carrots, celery, dates, egg-yolk, fish, grapefruit, ham, legumes, fish roe, fresh lemons, lettuce, animal livers, milk, nuts, oatmeal, okra, raw oysters, parsley, parsnips, pineapples, pork, potatoes with skins, prunes, radishes, unpolished rice, rye bread, spinach, turnips, and whole wheat bread; and to a still lesser extent in many other products.

Vitamin "C" is the third. "C" is the anti-scorbutic vitamin. It is water soluble, and is rapidly destroyed by heat. Vitamin "C" is essential in the prevention of scurvy. The most noticeable symptom of scurvy is the tendency to bleeding accompanied by a profound specific anemia. In children there may be bleeding at the edge of the gums and into the growing ends of the long bones causing marked tenderness which may result in fracture. In severe cases in adults loosening or even loss of the teeth may be noticed.

Abundant sources of Vitamin "C" are raw cabbage, citrus fruits, tomatoes, lettuce, green peppers, raw spinach, and raw turnips. It is probably the vitamin most widespread in all of our fruits and vegetables.

The fourth, or Vitamin "D", is the quite stable antirachitic vitamin. It promotes the assimilation of calcium and phosphorous and thereby controls the development of bones. Deficiency of this vitamin in the growing animal may result in rickets, soft bones, and poor teeth. The best known sources are sunshine, artificially produced ultra-violet rays, butter, cod-liver oil, egg yolk, and animal livers.

Some investigators report a fifth vitamin called Vitamin "E", which is alleged to influence reproduction and is known as the antisterility vitamin. Alleged good sources of vitamin "E" are, yellow corn, cotton seed, green leaves, fresh lettuce, and the germ of the wheat.

Vitamin "F", or Bl, is one of the twins known collectively as Vitamin "B", and since we have already counted Vitamin "B", we have given this vitamin no number.

The sixth and last of the known vitamins is Vitamin "G", which is heat stable and called the anti-pellagric vitamin. Vitamin "G" is another of the Vitamin twins, known sometimes as B2, and also P.P. Its absence in the diet is manifested in pellagra. This vitamin is present in animal livers, eggs, legumes, milk, and yeast.

You should remember that all the vitamins are essential to physical well being and growth, and that all are transmitted to the nursing child through the mother's milk.

The Vitamin deficiency conditions which I have mentioned, are rarely seen in this country, where we have such a wide variety of foods. And so my friends, you need not concern yourselves very seriously about vitamins. All you need to do is to properly balance your diet. All that is required to obtain sufficient quantities of the various vitamins, is a well balanced diet. In other words, eat a variety of foods. If you will do this you will not need to take pills to secure vitamins.

"Irradiated" is a term you will encounter on food labels. Irradiated foods are foods which have been subjected to the rays of ultra-violet light, which imparts some vitamin D. qualities to food products if they contain a substance called ergosterol. This element "Ergosterol", however, is contained in only a few of our food products, and when contained, often occurs only in very minute quantities, which makes it impossible to impart adequate quantities of D to protect against rickets. Therefore I say to you, that there is at the present time no adequate food substitute for Cod-liver oil as a source of both vitamins A and D, advertisements to the contrary notwithstanding. This statement is not intended to deny the value of certain concentrated Vitamin D medicinal preparations. Such preparations however may be prescribed by your physician, otherwise you will not encounter them.

Now label readers, apply intelligence to this problem, learn all you can about vitamins, use this information in the selection of your diet, and in evaluating vitamin label claims. Use all your faculties of reasoning to determine whether vitamin label claims are reasonable and logical and whether you should be influenced by them. Remember that such claims are selfish. Remember that the manufacturer has a motive, - he wishes you to buy his product - and wisely remember that all you need to do to secure ample vitamins, is to eat a well varied diet.